World Chronicle

UNITED NATIONS

PROGRAMME: No. 829 recorded 17 May 2001

GUEST: Jayantha Dhanapala
Under-Secretary-General
Department for Disarmament Affairs
United Nations

JOURNALIST: Irwin Arieff, Reuters
James Wurst, InterPress Service

MODERATOR: Michael Littlejohns

DISARMAMENT

Disarmament alone will not produce world peace. But the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, illicit arms trafficking, and burgeoning weapons stockpiles could advance both peace and development goals. As global military spending increases, can anything be done to prevent a new worldwide arms race? In this edition of **World Chronicle,** Jayantha Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General of the Department for Disarmament Affairs at the United Nations, talks about practical measures for ridding the world of both mass-destruction and conventional weapons.

WORLD CHRONICLE is produced by the Media Division, Department of Public Information, United Nations, New York, NY 10017, U.S.A.

Duration: 28:10"
Executive Producer: Chaim Litewski
Director: Livingston Hinckley
Production Assistant: Corazon A. Icasas

ANNOUNCER: From United Nations Headquarters in New York, this is **World Chronicle**, an unedited interview programme about major global issues.

Here now to introduce our guest is the host of today's **World Chronicle**.

LITTLEJOHNS: I'm Michael Littlejohns, and this is **World Chronicle**.

Global military spending is rising at an alarming rate after years of decline following the end of the Cold War a decade ago. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, global military spending last year reached $800 billion, or $130 for every person in the world. Are we heading for a new arms race worldwide?

Our guest today is an expert on the issues of disarmament. He is Jayantha Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General of the Department for Disarmament Affairs at the United Nations. Joining me to talk with Mr. Dhanapala are Irwin Arieff from *Reuters* and James Wurst of *InterPress Service*.

Mr. Dhanapala, welcome to **World Chronicle.**

DHANAPALA: Thank you.

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. Dhanapala, for years we were worried about a nuclear holocaust – World War III with the use of nuclear weapons.

DHANAPALA: We still are.

LITTLEJOHNS: Well, we still are but has the emphasis changed a bit – the focus – in light of the enormous increase in perhaps almost equally lethal but more easily obtained weapons of mass destruction, including small arms which can produce murder and mayhem almost on – well, not on the same scale but certainly on a considerable scale? Are these problems things which are now changing the focus of it?

DHANAPALA: Certainly with the end of the Cold War the prospects of a global war are much less with weapons of mass destruction being used but we still have over 30,000 nuclear weapons and they could be used either by design or by accident. And this question of an accidental nuclear weapon being used is very much behind also the ballistic missile defense plans of the Administration in Washington. So we cannot rule out the use of nuclear weapons. We cannot also rule out the possible use of nuclear weapons by sub-national groups or irregular groups.

LITTLEJOHNS: Terrorists?

DHANAPALA: Terrorists. And so we have to still bear that in mind. But you are quite right when you talk about the new visibility of small arms and light weapons and the enormous proliferation of this category of weapons. We have something like 550 million weapons circulating in the world and they are ...

LITTLEJOHNS: You mean weapons of all kinds?

DHANAPALA: Weapons of all kinds in the small arms category. They are being used in about 86-89 countries. They are being manufactured in many countries and the illicit trade in them is of frightening proportions. And this is why the July conference that was held in New York this year was so important in order to try to have some kind of measures at the national, regional and international level. But we are also seeing missile proliferation and this is an area where there are no norms. We began a study as a result of a UN General Assembly resolution this year so that we could have some kind of a normative process that can be begun, if not a kind of nuclear restraint regime because this is another very serious delivery vehicle for both conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction.

LITTLEJOHNS: President Bush wants to abrogate the missile treaty does that disturb you?

DHANAPALA: Well, the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty between the Russian Federation and the United States was a bilateral treaty but it has been, by common consent, regarded as underpinning the current strategic stability that we have had. And from the reaction of the Russian Federation, from the reaction of China and from the reaction of many of the US allies, it would appear that this is going to seriously upset the current strategic balance. It is also likely that if you abrogate one treaty an entire fabric of treaties will be upset.

LITTLEJOHNS: Sort of a domino effect.

DHANAPALA: This is true. And this is why the Russian Federation's warning that the abrogation of this treaty could affect their approach to other treaties, like the START I and START II, has to be taken very seriously. Which is why the Secretary-General has encouraged the consultative process that the Bush Administration has begun and which we hope will result in some kind of a consensus on this issue.

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. Bush seems to be a bit of a unilateralist to put it mildly, so he perhaps won't be much influenced by what's said in the UN. But what is the UN saying in terms

of the attitude of the Member States by and large beyond what you have already said about reactions?

DHANAPALA: Well, certainly there have been concerns that have been expressed by a wide number of countries and this has been going on for some time. We had in the last two General Assembly Sessions resolutions on the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, where the overwhelming majority wanted this treaty to be kept intact. There have also been a number of resolutions repeatedly voted upon in the General Assembly asking that outer space remain non-weaponized. This is also a very important aspect of the ballistic missile defence plans because there is a grave danger that outer space may be weaponized as a consequence of it, if it is in fact going to be a multi-layered missile defense programme. So it is very clear that the overwhelming trend in world opinion is against some of these plans because they do not see that firstly, the technology has been proven, secondly, that the threat is as imminent as some say it is and thirdly, because of its overall impact on the entire fabric of disarmament treaties and conventions.

ARIEFF: Sir, the recent terror attacks in the United States have raised a question in that they've created a spectre of a totally unseen type that we've never experienced before. There we had commercial aircraft – a commercial passenger aircraft – loaded with ordinary civilians crashed into buildings filled with people. What kind of international action can be taken against that kind of a weapon? Is there room there for some kind of international regime of control?

DHANAPALA: We are meeting in a very somber atmosphere because of what happened on this 11th of September and certainly we need to take stock of this. The Secretary-General has asked for cool and reasoned judgment. It is useful to go back to the Charter of the United Nations because those who drafted the Charter were very wise people. We have not ruled out the use of weapons completely. We are not talking about an idealistic utopian world where there are no weapons because Article 51 talks about the right of self-defence until such time as the Security Council has addressed the issue. And there is also in Chapter VII the right of defence in the collective interest of international peace and security. And both of those obviously require weapons to be used. So clearly this is a matter which the Security Council ideally should look at. If you can identify the person or persons responsible for this dastardly act of terrorism then there will be opportunities for action to be taken. There is also an international opprobrium that applies to terrorism wherever it may take place. We have conventions against terrorism, conventions

against hijacking; so all these are very important conventions. International law is clear and what we need to do is to have the Security Council now act on that.

ARIEFF: Do you fear that the revulsion and the horror that were generated by these attacks may tip world opinion against disarmament in general around the world?

DHANAPALA: I don't think so because I think we need to be aware of the fact that this situation could have been much worse than it has been. Consider for example if weapons of mass destruction were used by these terrorists. We need to eliminate weapons of mass destruction because they could fall into the hands of terrorists particularly. We don't want to give terrorists more tools than they have at the moment. We have to heighten vigilance, we have to strengthen anti-terrorists laws, anti-terrorists measures that we have and this can be done without necessarily increasing military expenditure. There has to be much greater civil society vigilance as well for this kind of thing and of course good governance in many countries where we have this kind of terrorist threat is one way in which we can keep it under control.

LITTLEJOHNS: But Mr. Dhanapala, all the treaties in the world are not going to deter guys like these?

DHANAPALA: Well, all the laws in any society will not deter criminals but that does not mean that those laws are invalid. So the treaties are important because they set norms and they give us -- civilized society -- the moral right to act in the name of those laws. This is why the laws and the treaties and the agreements that we have are so important.

WURST: When you take a look at these treaties, the existing regimes – never mind what could happen – the last in 2000 when the parties to the non-proliferation treaty agreed to a statement that included a list of practical steps for progressive steps towards disarmament, which also brings in a number of things like the test ban, the NPT, the Non-Proliferation Treaty itself, how valid do these remain not only in light of September 11th but in light of the presumably unchanged position of the US government that it's not relevant to US policy?

DHANAPALA: We begin the process of preparing for the 2005 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference next year and at these preparatory committee meetings under the strengthened review process that was nominated in 1995, we are going to have non-nuclear weapon states ask the nuclear weapon states – all of them – what their stance is and what have they have done in order to fulfill the final document of 2000. I think it's premature at this stage to make judgments as to how these 13 steps have been achieved but as you know, there

have been a number of countries certainly who have tried to make some steps with regard to unilateral reductions. And the Bush Administration itself has indicated that it would be ready to have unilateral reduction of its nuclear weapon arsenal.

WURST: Can we change pace then and go back to what Michael started with – the pointing out that after having global military spending declining it's now beginning to go up again. Absent of global threats what do you attribute this reversal in trend to?

DHANAPALA: We have seen an explosion in a number of internal wars that have been going on and this kind of conflict has led to increased spending. Tensions in a number of areas have grown up and of course modernization is usually the excuse that has been given by many countries in order to increase their military expenditure. There has also been this so-called revolution in military affairs; the application of information and communications technology to conventional weapons which has resulted in a very sophisticated kind of weapon, which is also a very expensive weapon. And these, I think, are the contributory causes for this increase that we have seen.

LITTLEJOHNS: This is **World Chronicle.** Our guest is Jayantha Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General of the Department for Disarmament Affairs at the United Nations. Mr. Dhanapala, India and Pakistan have joined the nuclear club how many other countries are there out there that the UN estimates to be on the brink of becoming nuclear powers?

DHANAPALA: Well, the only other power that is regarded as a nuclear weapon-capable state is Israel. If you look at the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty there are 44 countries that have been named in an annexure as requiring to sign and ratify that particular treaty for the treaty to enter into force. And the reason why those 44 countries were identified is because they are nuclear-capable. They have nuclear reactors. And their signature was vital in order to ensure that there will be absolutely no more testing done in the future. It is difficult, of course, to say that every one of those 44 has any nuclear ambitions. I mean I would not go so far as to say it but that was the decision taken by the negotiators that 44 countries should be able to both sign and ratify the treaty. Unfortunately, only 31 of them have signed and ratified and of the acknowledged nuclear weapon states under the Non-Proliferation Treaty, we still have two countries who have signed the treaty but not ratified it and that is the United States and China. We also have the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, India and Pakistan who have neither signed nor ratified. There will have to be an annual meeting of the treaty parties, and others, in

order to look at the treaty under Article 14 to see how far the conditions of it entering into force have been met, and if they have not been met what steps consistent with international law would have to be taken for it to enter into force.

ARIEFF: Sir, many of the wars and conflicts that the United Nations looks at involve small arms and light weapons – weapons like handguns and shoulder-launched missiles. What has the recent conference on small arms held at the United Nations last summer done to focus on these and what is being done right now to help control that situation?

DHANAPALA: Well, as a result of the UN taking a leadership role from 1995 on this issue, we had two expert reports that came out in 1997 and in 1999, both of which recommended that this Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons should be held. And we did hold this conference. It was successfully concluded after two weeks of intense debate and we did adopt by consensus a programme of action. We must now see that programme of action implemented. It will involve the cooperation of all countries and it will involve national measures, regional measures and international measures. We will have periodic conferences beginning in 2003 to assess what has been done and in 2006 we will have a major conference to review the implementation of the Programme of Action. A number of areas have been identified. One is to try to have some kind of agreement with regard to the marking of weapons and the tracing of weapons. The other is to have some kind of ....

LITTLEJOHNS: But the United States opposed that I thought?

DHANAPALA: No it did not. It agreed to that. What the United States opposed was the question of the civilian possession of guns being interfered with and secondly, the ban on the transfer of small arms and light weapons to non-state actors. And they were successful in keeping those two items out of the Programme of Action, despite the agonizing it caused many of the Member States, because particularly on the question of non-state actors it opens wide the danger of states helping non-state actors in various countries, including terrorists to go about their evil business. But to get back to your point Sir, what the other questions is, is a question of the brokering. And here again if you identify the brokers you minimize the danger of the illicit trade taking place. There were also a number of other arrangements with regard to the security of stocks – stockpile management. That has to be done in a very secure fashion. And again we are agreed to help countries which lack the capacity to do this kind of thing. So there will be a lot of international cooperation with regard to this.

ARIEFF: Though the United States has its own laws – and I think people believe that they're very strong laws on brokering, on regulating arms brokers and on marking and the tracing of small arms made in the United States – it did fight efforts to call in the small arms declaration for international treaties that would make this a more global programme rather than a by country by country programme. What efforts are underway right now to look at the international aspects and to make the programme against brokering and marking and tracing more global in scope rather than from country to country?

DHANAPALA: Well, the United States was not alone in opposing legal instruments on any aspect of the illicit trade issue and so there was no commitment in the Programme of Action for any specific instrument to be negotiated. But as a first step on the marking and tracing issue, there is going to be a study conducted on this matter so that we could explore a little further the feasibility of having some kind of instrument further down the road. So we are at a very early stage at this point of time and that feasibility study will be undertaken very soon.

WURST: Moving from in a sense the supply side of small arms to the demand side, what can really be done as you say – what was it 600 million?

DHANAPALA: Five hundred and fifty million in circulation.

WURST: How do you get those weapons out of circulation? I know you've got some small projects in Liberia, Albania, Guatemala, but that's only scratching the surface. How can you truly reduce the threat posed by so many weapons?

DHANAPALA: There was a commitment in the Programme of Action for countries to engage in weapons collection programmes, weapons surrender programmes, and weapons destruction. In fact, there was an agreement on a weapons destruction day as well and there was a symbolic ceremony in various parts of the world on the day on which the conference opened where weapons were destroyed. But we are looking at weapons collection programmes, weapons for development programmes, such as the one you referred to in Albania where as a result of economic incentives being given to individual communities such as in the Gramsh district of Albania, we had the voluntary surrender of weapons that were illegally held by civilians in return for road building and street lighting projects that were launched. We are going to have similar programmes in Niger and in many other countries – in Cambodia – and there are a number of developed countries that are ready to fund these programmes. But we need to have of course much more widespread readiness on the part of governments to

undertake the implementation of this Programme of Action to ensure that we seriously set about reducing the number of small arms and light weapons in illegal hands.

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. Dhanapala, we haven't spoken about landmines. Now these are still being manufactured and sold and the UN has been making tremendous efforts to de-mine various places where they're being sown, where is the main opposition coming from to international measures to ban the manufacture and sale of landmines and to increase the effort to destroy them?

DHANAPALA: Well, the Mine Ban Convention, which as you know was signed and ratified as a result of a very, very useful coalition of forces -- the international campaign for the banning of landmines which won a Nobel Peace Prize for its efforts; like minded countries like Canada, Norway and others -- all of them got together and had this very important disarmament agreement signed. But important countries have not signed it for a number of reasons. Some of them consider it necessary to use anti-personnel landmines because of their own military strategy. The US, for example, considers it necessary to use it in the Korean theatre. Finland, for example, also wants it to be used on their border. So we have a number of countries not yet ready to sign this important convention. But the number of mines that have been manufactured and laid and traded have significantly declined since this convention was signed and it is one of those very successful disarmament agreements which has been conscientiously pursued by those who have signed it. They meet once a year to review how the convention has been implemented. There is a de-mining center located in Geneva which provides international assistance. There is, of course, our own Mine Action Service in the United Nations, which has a five-year programme, and now there is consideration given to including unexploded ordnance as a remnant of war into this whole convention.

WURST: To quickly follow up on that, when all of this began it was clear that it was going to take a long time, not only clearing mines but rehabilitating survivors and rehabilitating the land and worried about donor fatigue. In other words that people would stop giving money well before the crisis ended. Are there signs of that now that we're four years into this?

DHANAPALA: Well, we find that the UN Mine Action Service, UNDP and others who are conducting this de-mining continue to be funded. Of course, there is always room for more funding in these very important humanitarian and disarmament endeavours but we still find a strong international commitment to implement this mine ban convention. There is, I

might add, another protocol – additional protocol – too under the certain conventional weapons convention which also deals with the question of anti-personnel landmines and there are those who are members of that convention and not the mine ban convention and who still are committed to this question of eliminating landmines.

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. Dhanapala, we have less than a minute left. I read some place that the cost of de-mining one mine is about a thousand dollars. Is that right?

DHANAPALA: Well, it is certainly considerably more than laying a mine and this phenomenal difference between eradicating mines and placing them is something that is mind-boggling and we would hope, therefore, that that is one reason why you would stop laying mines.

LITTLEJOHNS: And on this programme somebody produced a mine and said that it was manufactured in China, I believe, and costs about a dollar. Is that right?

DHANAPALA: It's very likely. Of course a number of countries manufacture mines. Even terrorists manufacture mines. You can do it in very crude technology but therefore it's quite conceivable that they do cost a dollar.

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. Dhanapala, that's all the time we have. Thank you for being with us on this edition of **World Chronicle.**

Our guest has been Jayantha Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General of the Department for Disarmament Affairs at the United Nations. He was interviewed by Irwin Arieff from *Reuters* and James Wurst of *InterPress Service.*

I'm Michael Littlejohns. Thank you for joining us. We invite you to be with us for the next edition of **World Chronicle.**

ANNOUNCER: Transcripts of the programme may be obtained free of charge by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to **World Chronicle**, United Nations, Room S-827L, New York, N.Y., 10017.

World Chronicle is broadcast worldwide and features guests whose work is concerned with major global issues. This programme is a Public Affairs Presentation of this station from United Nations Radio and Television.